

# Chapter 14

## Implementation of Machine Translation (MT) in University Curricula: Advantages for the First Stages of Translator Training

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In spite of the fact that in the last few years the widespread implementation of MT has completely reshaped translators' workbench, university curricula are not reacting quickly enough, which widens the gap between skills and competences required in the labor market and those acquired by students during their university education. As a result, the employability of graduates and the value of the degree are being affected negatively. In this chapter, a didactic unit is presented which is based on socio-constructivist methodology and aims at developing students' self-concept as future professionals, who shall assume a central role in the translation process, by interacting with MT and taking on control in the different stages and responsibility for the final product. Contrary to the prevalent idea that the implementation of MT in early stages of translator training may interfere with the development of translation competence, this didactic unit highlights its benefits.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the information age, the needs of a globalized market, coupled with the rapid pace of knowledge development and content creation, have forced institutions, agencies and language services companies to integrate MT (machine translation) into their workflow. According to the ELIS report (European Language Industry Survey 2022, p. 25) MT is already pervasive and continues to gain ground in the language services market at a great speed.

The results of this report reflect that 58% of language services companies have already implemented MT and an additional 20% are planning to incorporate this technology in the near future. The level of implementation in the case of language departments of international public agencies is even higher, reaching almost 90%.

Given this reality, we can only agree with the conclusion reached by Melby et al. (2019, p. 206) and Cid-Leal et al. (2018, p.191), among others, that as translator instructors we have the responsibility to prepare students to work in a market in which MT plays a crucial role.

Failure to assume this responsibility within a reasonable timeframe poses two main risks. On the one hand, the gap between the technology-related skills developed during training and the actual market requirements would increase, as pointed out by González et al. (2021, p. 3), and this would undoubtedly have an impact on the employability of graduates.

This employability would also be affected by the growing trend pointed out by Krause (2017, p. 153), towards considering the degree in Translation less and less as an added value when it comes to selecting personnel to fill the different positions arising from the implementation of MT and involved in the translation process.

On the other hand, we would contribute to perpetuate the self-image of many translators and translation students who, due to the lack of specific MT technological training (Torres-Hostench et al., 2016), equate their role within the translation process to that of “operators” (Rico 2017, p. 76), who merely “validate” (Cid-Leal et al. 2018, p. 190) the options devoid of communicative context offered by the machine.

This view of their work as a purely mechanical activity, in which such necessary skills for translators as critical reasoning and creativity are not emphasized, affects their self-esteem and thus the socioeconomic conditions of the professional collective.

Based on the situation described in the previous paragraphs, in this contribution we aim at highlighting the convenience of including MT in academic training for translators from the initial stages, progressively and in parallel to the development of translation competence, and at presenting a didactic unit arising of these reflections.

The chapter consists of an introduction, a first section outlining the background, firstly of the labor market and secondly of the training institutions, a second section consisting of a proposal of a didactic unit and a third section drawing some conclusions.

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